

ENTER CLUBHOUSE LINKEDIN ON STEROIDS

Wendy Lewis looks at the iOS app that has attracted 10 million users in less than a year



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IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT YOU HAVE any free time left in your day after seeing patients, marketing your practice and attempting to master Instagram and dabbling on TikTok, enter Clubhouse.

Clubhouse has quickly become one of the top social media networks on the planet. And by quickly, I mean since April 2020. The brainchild of Alpha Exploration Co., the audio-based network started as a niche app for Silicon Valley insiders, but it has quickly morphed into a mainstream platform with some points of difference.

What is Clubhouse and why you should care

Clubhouse is a live audio app that's a delightfully strange combination of something that sounds like it could be terribly boring but is, in fact, absolutely fascinating. It's kind of like a podcast, and it's kind of like being allowed to listen in on someone else's phone call.

Basically, Clubhouse lets users create rooms and clubs within the virtual space. Each room is an event in the form of an audio-only discussion among users. These discussions can be scheduled or might pop up unannounced. Discussions can engage just a few people in an interview format where other users simply listen in. The conversation can involve many users. These rooms and clubs are based on searchable themes and keywords that let users know what unites a group or event.

Clubhouse is in private beta and currently invite-only. You can currently sign up to reserve your username/handle, but to actually use the app, you do need an invitation from a current user. As of this printing, Clubhouse is only available on iOS; however, they have announced

their intention to work on an Android version of the app, which needs to come very soon to keep up their steady momentum.

Despite all the fanfare, Clubhouse does not make money yet. According to the Clubhouse blog, the app is pre-revenue, meaning that is it not monetized. However, Clubhouse is planning to roll out beta tests for monetization options sometime this year. We can expect them to focus on some form of a crowdfunding model that pays creators directly like TikTok vs. the typical display ads we buy into on Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest.

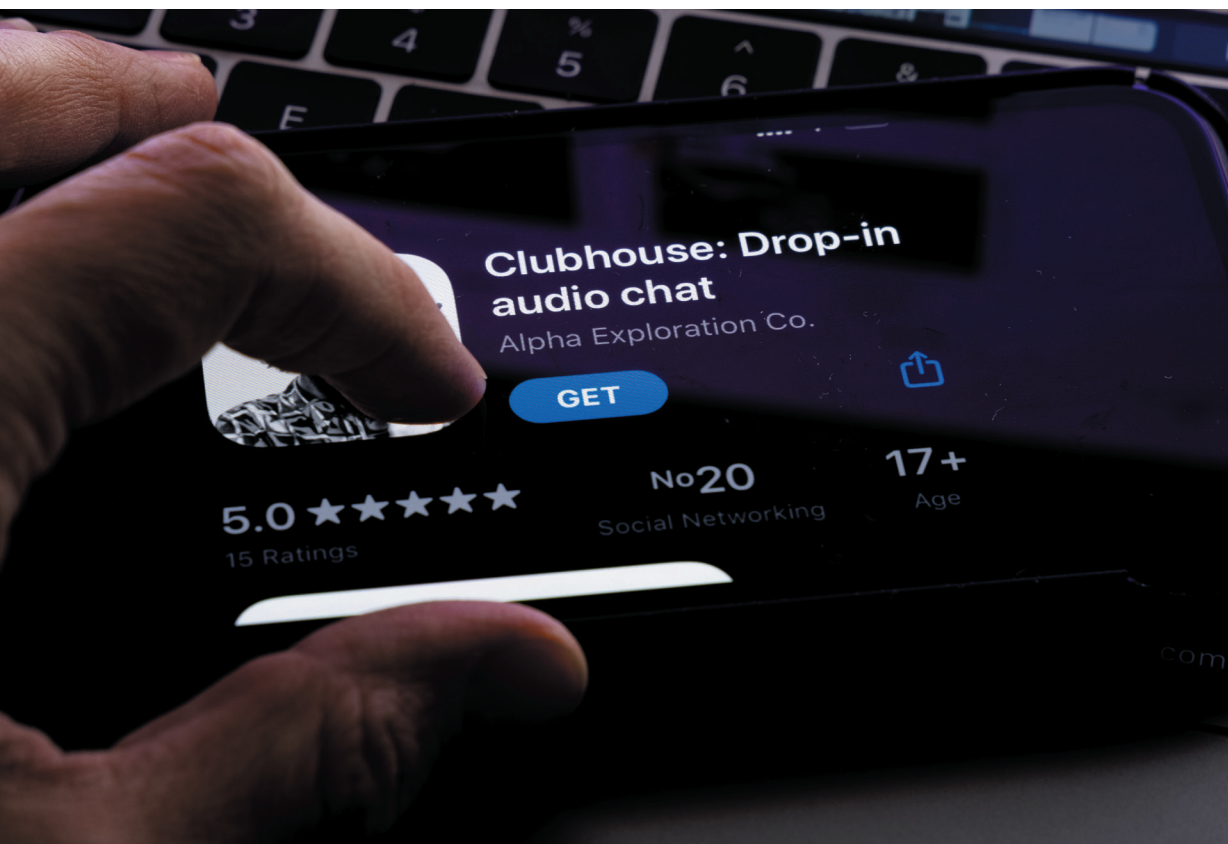
Privacy caveats and data collection concerns

For individuals and businesses, there are some potentially big red flags to consider before you go all in. To join, the app requires your real phone number from your iPhone or iPad, which gives it access to all of your contacts whether you like it or not. It also allows anyone who has your phone number to share it with anyone or with any room without your knowledge or consent.

Another thing to contemplate is that if you want to delete your account, you have to request it from the developer. Seriously? So, once you're on the app, you may not be able to break up with Clubhouse straight away. There are some scathing complaints about this on their App Store profile.

Supposedly conversations aren't recorded by the app. A distinct contrast between Clubhouse and any garden variety podcast is that you need to listen live because the chats and discussions are not archived, or so they stated early on. Yet I have read some reviewers claiming that Clubhouse 'temporarily' stores voice recordings on their servers, which makes one wonder, well which is it? So, we really don't know the details of whether chats recorded and saved or not, and I

“As membership grows as new users flock to the hottest new app, the most valuable way to use it is to create meaningful contacts in real life.”



Fast facts about Clubhouse

- Developed by Paul Davison and Rohan Seth, parent company Alpha Exploration in 2020
- Officially launched in April 2020 – in the middle of a global health crisis
- Clubhouse has 10M weekly active users, up from 600,000 in December 2020.
- Currently valued at \$1B (up from \$100M in May 2020)
- Raised more than \$10M to date; Over 180 organisations and venture capitalists have invested. In January 2021, they raised a Series B round from Andreessen Horowitz for an undisclosed amount
- Considered a 'unicorn startup,' joining the ranks of Uber and AirBnB. In venture capital terms, a unicorn is a privately held startup company valued at over \$1B
- Currently ranked #5 in the App Store under the 'Social Networking' category
- The app has over 609K ratings with an average review score of 4.77 stars in the iOS app store. 531K reviews are 5 stars.

doubt they will ever tell us. This should make anyone quiver about what they are planning to do with all the data the app is collecting about each of us. However, if you do want to archive a chat or discussion on your own, nothing is stopping you (yet) from recording chats on your own simultaneously.

Another red flag is that it does not appear that the app is really making an effort to moderate hateful, toxic content, or disinformation, which continues to be a major global problem for all social media sites.

LinkedIn on steroids

The most obvious benefit of Clubhouse is the myriad networking opportunities to connect with more people in your industry. Insider insight may be valuable in countless ways, including spotting and discussing trends, broadening perspectives, and benefiting from shared wisdom. By listening to and participating in events, you can effectively expand your network tenfold.

Aesthetic gynaecologist Carolyn A. Delucia, MD, and bestselling author, practising in New York City and Hillsborough, NJ, has been spending some time on Clubhouse. 'It is the newest, most exciting social media platform where people from all walks of life come to share. It is attractive to entrepreneurs and has opened up

“ At its core, Clubhouse provides a stimulating platform for connecting with people who you might never have an opportunity to meet in your office or at a conference. ”

opportunities to pitch new ideas and businesses to some of the largest venture capitalists in the world. Clubhouse is a way to promote your practice, books, online courses and concepts to the world. I have met and formed friendships that will last forever due to a deep connection. What I love about it is that it evens out the playing field making everyone equal and able to share their thoughts and ideas.'

She continues, "The drawbacks and dangers that I see are that it can be addictive and suck you in consuming a lot of time. Just like anything, you must limit the time you allow yourself to be "in rooms". To date, you can only be on Clubhouse if you own an Apple device and not androids. This is the first of this type of platform and I have already heard of multiple copycat apps already in the making.'

Who's active on Clubhouse?

Everyone from your colleagues, employees, neighbours, college professors, customers, and boss, to CEOs, venture capitalists, tech entrepreneurs, bankers, plus the usual slew of A to D-list celebs, influencers in all fields, activists, multi-level marketers and people trying to sell you something. Basically, whatever your interests or industry, you can find clubs and events with conversations that can inform, inspire, and connect you to others in your field.

For example, some of the more aggressive and money-grabbing Shark Tank alum, Daymond John, Kevin O'Leary (aka Mr. Wonderful), and Kevin Harington are in full >



“If you want to delete your account, you have to request it from the developer. Seriously? So, once you're on the app, you may not be able to break up with Clubhouse straight away.”

Clubhouse secret sauce: skills with a side of luck

Clubhouse has greatly benefited from good luck and even better timing. Clubhouse has greatly benefited from good luck and even better timing. Since March 2020, most of the world has been stuck at home with time to spare and more reasons to explore entertainment on our devices to overcome sadness, fear and isolation. In the past year, content creators across the spectrum have flocked in record numbers to the hottest social media outlets, from TikTok to Instagram, to break their boredom and stay visible and relevant. These include celebs, rappers, athletes, fitness instructors, chefs, activists, beauty bloggers, designers, models, and of course, doctors of all specialties. Instagram Live and Reels (a TikTok copycat) have picked up steam considerably. This is where Clubhouse comes in; think of it as a cross between the best of Instagram Lives and podcasts that can create memorable moments to bring people together in unlimited creative ways.

▷ force. John runs a popular Clubhouse club called, 'If You Want to Be Rich, Think Like This!!!', which is not unlike the Facebook ads he blasts to get users interested in learning his secrets for success. O'Leary did a 'Billion Dollar Pitch' for startups.

Profiles can be found for C-Suite executives from a wide range of companies, including food, beauty, fashion, wellness, fitness, hotels, MLM brands, real estate, and consumer packaged goods, including: Hinge, Barkbox, WhoWhatWear, Sporting goods, Martell Cognac, Pernod, Burger King, Popeyes, and Tim Horton's.

The experience Clubhouse offers is similar to an audio-only virtual event, but on a much larger scale. Of the 10M users they claim to date, at any given time, there could be several thousand active rooms where people from around the world are holding conversations about an increasingly wide range of topics. The voice-only feature is similar to podcasts, which are played on demand. Personally, I am more content logging on with just my headshot showing, rather than having to get dressed up with hair and makeup to go on Zooms.

Clubhouse advantages for businesses

Clubhouse is a creative marketer's dream come true. The nature of the app lends itself beautifully to building brand awareness through word-of-mouth campaigns.

For practitioners, medspa owners and managers, this presents a unique opportunity to establish your place in the market and your community and elevate your brand to be a go-to resource on particular topics of interest. It can also be a good way to promote products, services, special offerings, and events. Another good way to use the app is for the recruitment of staff, partners, tenants, sales reps, aestheticians, vendors, architects, builders, and more.

You will have the ability to tap into numerous opportunities to share your story, special expertise, connect with customers, get product feedback, run a focus group, and generate marketing awareness. Simply by providing value to like-minded individuals, you can gain a reputation or sharing high-quality advice and develop real-world connections that may lead to new business

opportunities. Mentoring is a two-way street.

At its core, Clubhouse provides a stimulating platform for connecting with people who you might never have an opportunity to meet in your office or at a conference. The ability to get expert advice and throw ideas back and forth is a huge advantage when you are working hard to grow your practice or business. Getting a fresh perspective from experts outside of medical, aesthetics, and patient care can potentially arm you with what you need to take your business to the next level.

You have the ability to set the pace you are comfortable with for how involved you want to be. Drop into rooms, listen to conversations, ask questions and share your experiences. Determine the best ways to connect your business and your brand with other experts in your field, as well as potential clients and partners. Clubhouse isn't really a sales funnel; rather it is a networking and brand-building platform. It can be entertaining as well, if you are so inclined to spend extra time. It is wise to spend the bulk of your participation listening and contributing to conversations that are most relevant to your market and profession. The best opportunities arise from the deep connections you can make along the way, as well as how much you can learn just by being a passive listener.

Find people, rooms, and clubs to follow

When you first open the app, you will be in the hallway and you'll see a list of rooms. Clubhouse rooms are akin to a room you might walk into at a conference or to listen to a presentation. There is usually a speaker or a few speakers on stage. These rooms will mostly be based on the people and clubs you follow but you'll see trending rooms as well. If you're new to the app, it will automatically recommend some people for you to follow who may be contacts in your iPhone directory. The style and size of rooms in the hallway varies from big keynote-style rooms to large panel rooms to small rooms with only a few people. As you wander into rooms, you will discover other interesting people to follow on the stage or in the audience. As you spend more time, the variety and number of rooms showing up in your hallway will change and expand.

With all the options and layers available on the app, the best approach is to keep it simple. You can get the most out of your Clubhouse experience by being strategic with the people, rooms, and clubs you follow. Following these too randomly can lead to seeing too many rooms and clubs you're not interested in and getting lost. If you are diligent about what and who you follow, the hallway will tend to show you rooms that match your interests.

As you spend more time on Clubhouse, you may find yourself in a public room hosted by a club. Tap on the green house icon to learn more about the club, see who the members are, and then decide whether you want to follow it. As you get acclimated, look at the people and clubs followed by the people you follow to find more that may be of interest.

The member and club directories are both searchable by keywords, as is the event calendar, which shows upcoming scheduled events. Searching each of these by terms that relate to your interests helps to find more people, rooms, and clubs to follow.

When you're in a room, you'll see three sections of people. The first section, the stage, shows the speakers. The second section, the front row, shows people followed by the speakers. The third section shows the audience. Tapping on people in the front row can reveal more people you may decide to follow.

Growing a following

Growing a following on Clubhouse can have serious implications for your standing and your business, but the time commitment may be a deal breaker for busy practitioners. I prefer to keep ClubHouse open in the background and when I hear something interesting, I perk up and focus on the chat or an individual speaker. If your goal is to position yourself to attract a solid and loyal following, you will need to set aside time during your otherwise busy day to be active on the app and show up on stages.

While it might be tempting to jump into large rooms, the chances of getting noticed in a crowd of 5,000 other people is slim to none. Rooms with 5, 10, or 20 people in the audience often present a better chance you'll be invited on stage. You also want to make sure that the rooms you enter are relevant to your industry. As you get more active and show up consistently, you will get to know the people who frequent them. The individuals who host those rooms may be more likely to pull you up onto the stage where people in the audience will notice you. The more you show up on stage, the more followers you are able to attract.

If you are brought on stage, try to avoid tooting your own horn. Rather, focus on delivering value to the audience and the value to your own agenda will follow. You may ask a question or answer a question clearly and crisply. If you can offer interesting or entertaining commentary that people want to hear,

Some of the high profile individuals who are active on Clubhouse:

- Paris Hilton
- Champion boxer Floyd Mayweather
- Elon Musk
- Malcolm Gladwell
- Actor Daniel Dae Kim
- Mark Zuckerberg
- Kevin Hart
- Chris Rock
- Comedienne Tiffany Haddish
- Malcolm Gladwell
- MC Hammer
- Van Jones of CNN
- Ashton Kutcher

Mastering Clubhouse Clubs

- Hallway – List of rooms where discussions happen
- Event Calendar – Shows rooms that have been scheduled
- Clubs – A way to assemble people in advance for future events or rooms

they may click on your bio to learn more about you and follow you. Every time you open a room or join a stage, your followers will get a notification that you are live, which can go far to help you to attract more followers.

Best practices for hosting a Clubhouse room

When you create a room, it is best not to be the only one on the stage. Partner with people within your industry who have a larger following than you do to tap into their network. When your partners come on stage, their followers will get a notification, so they are more likely to jump into the room and follow you as well.

When you create a room, you automatically become a moderator for that room so you will control who comes up on stage. You will be able to mute people and give other users the role of moderator. As host, your goal is to bring order to the room and anticipate what the audience needs. You may need to take a short break in order to prompt the audience to follow your moderators. When you welcome everyone back, you can prompt them to ping someone they know into the room to keep the momentum going.

Take advantage of the diversity of the global audience. Including experiences from users from all over the world with different perspectives who can make your conversations more interesting, diverse, and appreciated by your audience.

Clubhouse offers the appeal of an exclusive members-only club in app form. A club's public rooms are open to anyone and members will get a notification when you create or open a public room. There is also the option to create private rooms that allow members to have discussions with each other or allow you to deliver exclusive access and information that you don't want to share publicly. Your club can have multiple admins, which means you don't have to personally create, host, and moderate every single room. You may choose to let these admins create rooms on behalf of your club.

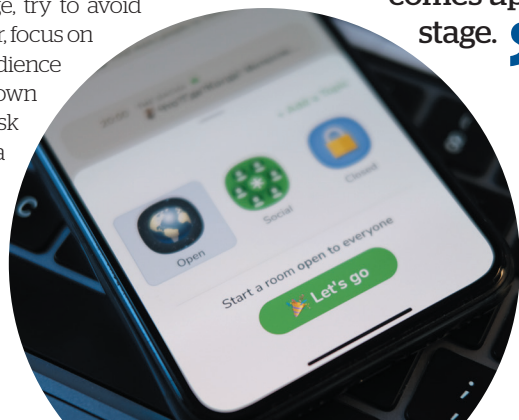
Giving away free advice to get new business

Create your own chat rooms around your areas of expertise and start to build a community of followers. You may be pleasantly surprised at how much great free advice is available for the asking on Clubhouse. I know many users who cannot believe that they are gaining new clients as easily and quickly on the app as a result of making connections.

You can stumble on chats about finance, business, marketing, AI, investing, start-ups, and countless other important topics. To identify the topics that can help you solve a problem or strengthen your business, just search keywords and see what pops up as new ones appear on a constant basis.

The currently closed beta exclusivity of the app may keep conversations limited to similar bubbles with less diversity and representation. However, users can enter and leave chat rooms as desired in search of the best ones that cover topics they are most interested in listening to and participating in. Time will tell how sticky these >

“When you create a room, you automatically become a moderator for that room so you will control who comes up on stage.”



▷ rooms will ultimately be as the Clubhouse model evolves.

Another way to use the Clubhouse platform to engage with potential customers or patients is by conducting virtual events. As an example, your medspa could promote a live conversation about specialty combination treatments that address something that is likely on-trend, like maskne or body sculpting. In this way, your audience could get educated about the topic and experience how you treat clients. Your dermatology practice could host an event focused on dispelling the ‘Top 10 Skincare Ingredient Myths.’ The potential for customer engagement is infinite.

10 Tips for Getting Started

1. You need an invite to join

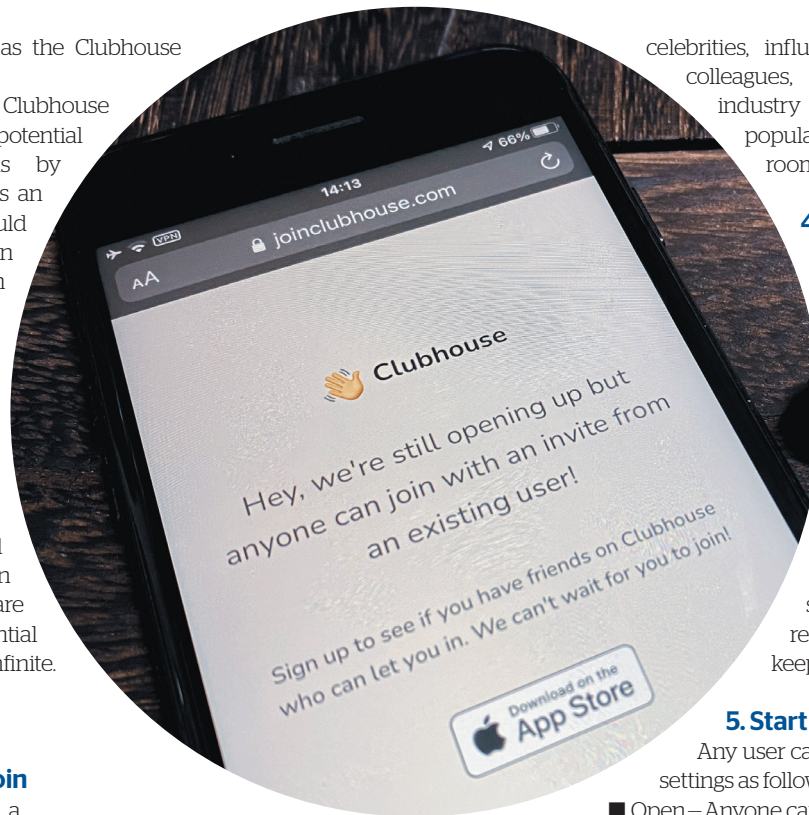
Anyone can reserve a username, but to participate on the app, users must secure an invite for immediate access. This sounds more exclusive than it actually is. If you want to join, you can sign on and the app will notify people you are connected to on your iPhone or iPad to invite you in. So, although it may seem like an invite-only club, it is not so difficult to get in, but that cache of ‘members only’ has raised awareness among users to jump the queue. Furthermore, if you invite someone, they are forever linked to you on the app, so keep that in mind as you go along.

2. Optimize your Clubhouse bio

Your Clubhouse bio is where you can tell everyone what you want to be known for. What you include in your bio will determine how people find you via searches in the member directory or the club directory, and the type of followers you attract. Include the basics: what you do, where you do it, your title, active channels, social media profiles, and clubs you have launched. You can also include the username for each profile and a call to action leading people to connect with and message you on your main social media platform. Some advanced users change their Clubhouse bios and/or picture or logo depending on the room they enter at the time, similarly to the ‘link in bio’ option on Instagram.

3. Explore evolving topics, then follow people and clubs

After creating your profile, follow popular users, relevant



“ Anyone can reserve a username, but to participate on the app, users must secure an invite for immediate access. This sounds more exclusive than it actually is. ”

celebrities, influencers, business moguls, friends, colleagues, associates, partners, mentors, industry contacts, and more to begin populating your home page with chat rooms.

4. Join live chats or follow clubs to be notified about topic-specific conversations

Conversations on Clubhouse evolve at an alarming rate, with new ones getting started on a 24/7 basis, which makes it hard to keep up with it all. You can join chats at any hour of the day or night and there is a huge library to choose from. The app allows you to add any upcoming conversations you want to join straight to your calendar as a reminder, which is a neat feature to keep you organized.

5. Start your own chat room

Any user can start their own room with privacy settings as follows:

- Open – Anyone can join
- Shared – Followers can join
- Closed – People you select can join.

Most chat rooms appear to be Open format so far, which will obviously attract the largest number of users, at least at the beginning. As the rooms expand, they may break up into subgroups of users interested in more narrow and specific topics. Eventually, these can drill down to even more specialized topics for a very targeted audience.

6. Invite people you want to include in your chat rooms

You can search for friends or colleagues who may already be active or have been invited and not responded, or by their cell phone number through your iPhone address book. The hook is that you will get credit for the invite on their profile. With each credit you incur, you are able to invite more people to the app. So, basically, the app is rewarding users to grow their audience, which is proving to be a smart strategy that taps into the natural impulses of the sophisticated users they are trying to attract. Because the app is pulling contacts from your phone book, there may be dupes, or old phone numbers that are no longer valid, former places of employment, people who have moved away, etc. You may want to take the time to clean up your phone book before starting this process.

7. Join more clubs and chat rooms

Find like-minded people by joining clubs related to your interests or specialty and listen in on conversations in chat rooms. Stay for a few minutes in a room about digital marketing, then move on to a discussion on AI, migrate to a retirement strategy session, and pop into a chat about beauty trends, for example. The options are limitless, but

your time is not. So, try to stick with topics that are valuable to your interests specifically to get the most out of your investment in time.

8. Try to create good value for other users

Pick a topic that you know a lot about and think others can benefit from and set a time to host your first chat room. An example might be, 'Pearls for optimizing microneedling therapy: How I Do It'. Develop an outline in advance so you know the key points you want to bring up, and how the flow should go. Always leave time for questions, which is one of the central themes of Clubhouse. The ability to ask questions of experts on a wide variety of topics is a huge attraction for users. Your goal should be to wow attendees so that they can walk away satisfied that the time they invested was worthwhile and will talk about you to their own circle of friends and colleagues to expand your reach.

9. Add another twist to boost engagement

Clubhouse makes it easy for people to find each other and meet up, but you have to keep it interesting to hold their attention as the app can be very distracting during this growth period. For example, consider inviting a keynote speaker who is a specialist on a hot topic of interest to your audience and ask trending questions that users may be intrigued by.

Clubhouse goes global

Clubhouse is currently available in 154 of the total 175 countries the iOS App Store operates in. Nearly a third of downloads have been in the US to date, reportedly 3.2M. Japan has registered 1.8M downloads to date and is the only other market in which downloads have exceeded one million. Clubhouse is currently the #1 most downloaded app in Germany, Japan, Slovakia, and Turkey. Countries that have seen downloads over half a million:

- Germany 735,000
- Brazil 615,000
- Russia 540,000
- Malaysia 567,000

The seventh and eighth-largest markets are both in the EU:

- Italy 435,000
- UK 397,000
- Completing the top ten are:
- South Korea 387,000
- Turkey 363,000

Although China jumped on this trend, the app does not appear to be available there at this time.

These statistics are evolving rapidly as the Clubhouse hype is catching on across the globe.

The future of Clubhouse

There is clearly some psychology behind the Clubhouse model; the founders know more than a little about human nature to tap into our precious egos. They seem to have used this knowledge and skill set to get users addicted to the platform quickly. Every chat room is a living entity that changes and morphs constantly, which keeps users'

interest in going back again. You never really know in advance where the conversation will take you because nothing is actually scripted, and the players change all the time.

This seemingly simple audio chat room app has earned its place in the social platform hall of fame practically overnight. In fact, Clubhouse has already pushed the last social media darling, TikTok, down a few notches. Based on its rapid rise in valuation, it has attracted venture capital cash at a record-breaking rate.

With instant fame comes aggressive challengers hoping to steal some of their thunder.

While Clubhouse is differentiated at the moment and is credited with essentially created the category, competitors are rising to the challenge, eager to put their own stamp on this enterprising new model.

As other platforms enter this category, Clubhouse will need to move quickly to compete with many well-established, fully funded and highly profitable challengers as they arise.

These include:

- Twitter Spaces
- Fireside (Mark Cuban is involved in this)
- Instagram Rooms could be a major competitor
- Microsoft is looking to enter as well, perhaps to integrate with their LinkedIn platform
- Reddit
- Facebook is testing their Hotline channel
- Snapchat Spotlight is also in the running
- Discord which caters to GenY and collegiates has Stage Channels.
- Spotify is also in the race.

The looming competition presents a measurable threat to their future. But in the tech world, as we have learned, everyone copies everything.

As we emerge from the pandemic, vaccinated and emboldened, we will see who the real winners are. One thing is certain, we will be talking about Clubhouse for the foreseeable future, and it will surely be interesting to take this ride with them.



“ Clubhouse has greatly benefited from good luck and even better timing. Since March 2020, most of the world has been stuck at home with time to spare and more reasons to explore entertainment on our devices to overcome sadness, fear and isolation. ”

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